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By- Bard, Morton
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Universities have responded to increasingly imperative societal demands by expanding their public service activities, often in the form of social action programs. This development has not extended to the field of psychology, in which the university psychological center could effectively serve to collaborate on university-community efforts. Such a center at the City College in New York has been conducting an experimental project in which a unit of 9 white and 9 black policemen, biracially paired, were trained to combine their normal work with the skills of family crisis intervention specialists. They receive regular consultative support from the Center staff. Their work covers a West Harlem area of 85,000 people to whom they are available at the time of a crisis, 24 hours a day. In 1 year the unit served 665 families, enhancing police-community relations in the area. The Police Department has been provided with a capacity it previously lacked for reducing certain types of crime and injuries to policemen, and the community has benefitted from direct university involvement. The results clearly demonstrate that university psychological services can be successfully provided through existing community agencies, and that the use of these agencies may be more logical and economical than the creation of new ones. The Center is working on a similar project with the Fire Department. (WM)

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Extending Psychology's Impact through Existing Community Institutions*

Morton Bard
The City College
The City University of New York

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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In today's complex and turbulent world, society insistently demands more broadly based applications of knowledge. The university--traditionally the seat of knowledge--has always operated from a position of detached objectivity...certain that its very isolation from the mundane realities of everyday life somehow insured its greatest contribution to human welfare. But this idealized and outmoded notion has less and less relevance in the face of rapid social change.

In the past, the operational schema called for a clear separation between knowledge-seeking and knowledge-applying. The university was regarded as being exclusively knowledge-seeking; knowledge application was left to any number of other institutions. This continuing dichotomous situation, however, has had serious adverse effects upon both. No more dramatic illustration of this can be found than in the field of "mental health." The mental health practitioner's applications often bear little, if any, relationship to the new knowledge coming from the university. Similarly, the knowledge-seeking of the university often bears little relationship to the realities of how that knowledge is to be used for the good of society.

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It is becoming quite clear now, however, that there has existed for some time a natural avenue for bringing about a creative coalescence of knowledge-seeking and knowledge-application...that is, through increasing the imaginative effectiveness of university programs already committed to both. Clinical, social and industrial psychology appear the logical choices for bridging the gap between the past and the future.

It is perhaps for this reason that the idea of the psychological center has stood in contradistinction to the traditional "clinic." The concept of the center contains all of the elements at once faithful to the most cherished ideals of the university and yet, also, logically consistent with the new demands for community involvement. The center can be viewed in two ways: 1) as the focal point of the research and action functions derived from psychological science; and 2) as a point of convergence of the various sub-discinplines within psychology. The idea of the psychological center embodies both...it focuses psychological knowledge-seeking while increasing communication among psychologists whose disparate interests would ordinarily result in socially limited applications.

The psychological center stands to serve particularly well in the vanguard of university-community collaboration. The strategy of that collaboration, however, is a crucial issue. Any effort to dispense largesse, any attempt to do something <u>for</u> the community rather than to do something <u>with</u> the community will not only fail but will widen the gap and reinforce the community's conviction of the detached exploitativeness of the university.

At The City College in New York we have been experimenting, in a very modest way, with a model for extending psychology's impact through existing community institutions. For one thing, we decided to identify critical agencies in the community already engaged in the psychological front-lines and to lend ourselves to facilitating their psychological usefulness without in any way compromising their basic mission. Secondly, we decided that any self-limited consultation effort would have as a primary goal the preparation of that agency's staff to perform autonomous functions when our Center's relationship with it terminated. (Commonly, when a project is over and the "experts" leave, everything returns to the earlier status quo!)

There is little question that the relief of manpower shortage is one of the most knotty issues confronting the psychological helping professions. We have focused upon this issue, but we have rejected the model which calls for the development of new careers, as admirable as that approach may appear from a social and economic point of view. Variously called "indigenous non-professionals," "case-aides," "facilitators," "community expeditors," and a host of other names, it would appear to us to be an approach with very limited prospects. It is safe to anticipate that, as these new groups develop a sense of pride and a sense of identity, there will be a growing discontent. From all that we know, we can expect that with identity will come a concern for quality, a desire for improved standards, a need for more knowledge, and a search for status and power within the mental health establishment. Once the "non-professional" becomes "professional," as indeed he must, he will become more exclusive and restrictive, limiting his numbers and once again leaving the manpower problem where it has been.

This inevitable sequence can be avoided and manpower shortages relieved realistically if we identify and utilize individuals already engaged in the psychological front-lines, even if they are there unwittingly; and, if we enhance their normal job functions so that they derive increased job satisfaction within their already solidly defined identities. We have demonstrated the viability of this approach in a current consultative project* involving nine white and nine black policemen, bi-racially paired, who function as family crisis intervention specialists in a West Harlem area of 85,000 people. These men are policemen and have no desire to be anything but policemen. They have a sense of identity and feel pride in their work. However, they have been trained and receive regular consultative support in responding to all family disturbances in their area. (Only 2 of the 18 man a radio car on each tour of duty.) These men do all other police work, but where an incident involves a family problem, their car is dispatched. Through this method, skillful intervention is available to area residents at the very moment of crisis, without the necessity of waiting out a "list" at a social agency and even if the crisis occurs at a time of day or day of week when helping agencies are normally closed. The police are available 24 hours a day.

The primary prevention and case-finding implications of this program are clear. In one year, the unit has served as a primary mental health resource to 665 families. But the collaboration has had other effects on the psychological climate in the community. There is evidence

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* This project, entitled "Training Police as Specialists in Family Crisis Intervention," is supported in part by the Office of Law Enforcement Assistance, United States Department of Justice, Training Grant #157, and in part by the N.Y.C. Police Department and The City College.

of some modification in community attitudes as a consequence of the unit's functioning. Not only do community residents regard the men as somehow different from other policemen, but they have spontaneously begun to use their local police as a referral resource. Families served by the unit have suggested to other families that they call the police or visit the station house at a time of trouble. Indeed, there have been changes in the police community as well. From initial skepticism and cynicism, other patrolmen have come to respect the skill of the family specialists and have begun to use their fellow policeman as family crisis consultants.

One of the essential features of this approach is that we as psychologists have not asked policemen to become psychologists or social workers. Nor have we asked them to altruistically dedicate themselves to a mental health function. This highlights the necessity for recognizing that entry into an existing organizational structure must be preceded by careful research and analysis. The university psychological center is particularly well suited to this. Its effort to modify the existing agency's normal functioning so that it serves mental health objectives must at the same time enhance that agency in its defined mission. In the instance cited, the most potent force for facilitating entry was heightening the Police Department's awareness of the costliness in manpower-loss of inadequate attention given the domestic disturbance as a police function. We pointed out that more than 20% of patrolmen killed in the line of duty nationally were slain during a family intervention. We also demonstrated that about 40% of men injured in the line of duty were hurt while responding to a family disturbance. In addition, we showed that about one-third of the homicides, as well as a

large percentage of assaults and suicides, were the direct outgrowth of domestic strife. Our entry was facilitated by suggesting that an experimental program could demonstrate that psychological training and supportive consultation would reduce these types of crime and reduce injuries to policemen while at the same time providing a community service through primary preventive mental health.

Clear representation was made of the mutual advantages in the collaboration. The police would receive the obvious advantages of greater personnel safety, more efficient operation, and better community relations. The university psychological center, on the other hand, would have a chance to train doctoral students in the techniques of consultation and have an opportunity to provide a real service to the community. And, most of all perhaps, this kind of community involvement offers most in relation to the university's knowledge-seeking function. The project described has afforded a range of research opportunities on everything from the epidemiology of the family fight to unprecedented access to a subject population for the naturalistic, in vivo study of intrafamilial aggression from a variety of viewpoints.

Now we are involved in effecting still another collaborative relationship with an existing agency. The success of the police project has served to ease entry into other organizations. At the moment, the project in its most advanced stage of planning involves the New York City Fire Department. In this project, the Center's social psychologists will play a prominent role in a program dealing with one of the most incendiary of all urban conditions...the increase in false alarms and the harassment of fire fighters.

The problems posed by collaboration with the Fire Department are vastly different from those in dealing with the Police Department. A great deal was previously known about the phenomenon of family disturbance and its relationship to crime, mental health and the function of the police. The spectacular rise in false alarms of fire and the sudden, unprecedented and accelerating increase in physical attacks upon fire fighters, however, is so recent that there is little accumulated knowledge upon which to base a community psychology action program. In the police project, the "givens" permitted the design of an action program immediately; in the fire department project, we have first to discover the "givens" upon which the subsequent action program is to be based. This circumstance has made necessary the kind of collaboration within the Center which demonstrates the kind of community resource depth which makes a center unique as a psychological facility. The nature of the problem makes it necessary and yet quite natural that our social and clinical psychologists work together: the former in the first stage, to search out the "givens"; the latter in the second stage, to bring about modification of socially disturbing behavior through a specific action program.

Consistent with our conviction that planning for exit is as important as planning for entry, we intend to leave the Fire Department with a capacity it did not have prior to our collaboration. We suggested that Fire Department personnel be assigned to the Psychological Center to serve as active participants in the design and mounting of the project. At the moment, we may be the only psychological facility with two fire fighters as members of its staff. These two men, however,

with our consultative support, have researched the problem and developed a proposal which has been submitted for funding. The Fire Department now has two trained men who may now serve as a resource within their organization even after the Center's intensive consultative relationship terminates.

The university psychological center is in an unusually favorable position to serve its community as a "think tank." But the center's attitude must be scrupulously collaborative...it must assiduously avoid the posture of intellectual superiority. The psychological center can serve its own educational and research missions while at the same time providing service, yet extending the impact of psychology within the community. Two examples have been presented which typify the kinds of university-community collaboration possible through the medium of the Psychological Center. These illustrative activities involve community institutions which are authoritarian and para-military in nature; organizations which ordinarily would be regarded as being inimical to psychological education or research and certainly regarded as far removed from having "mental health" possibilities. And, finally, we must recognize and acknowledge that existing organizational structures are viable avenues for effecting social change. The challenge inherent in using existing structures may be more logical and ultimately more economic than the creation of new ones.

FOOTNOTE

[1]Bard, M. and Berkowitz, B. "Training Police as Specialists in Family Crisis Intervention: A Community Psychology Action Program," Community Mental Health Journal, 3(4), Winter, 1967, 315-317.